PERCEPTIONS OF NON-OPIOID TREATMENT FOR PAIN IN A HOMELESS POPULATION

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OBJECTIVE

Approximately 50% of the homeless population in the United States report chronic pain. Recent studies show the homeless population have used the following to treat pain:

- Over-the-counter medications
- Alcohol
- Drugs, including prescription and illicit opioids

The aim of this study is to investigate the perceptions of the homeless population regarding non-opioid treatments for pain, including:

- Osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT)
- Physical therapy
- Massage therapy
- Chiropractic treatment

DESIGN

In-person surveys were conducted among three sessions over an eight-week period at True Worth Place Homeless Shelter. Responses were recorded through multiple choice, binary, and free-text components and transferred to a secure document.

RESULTS

Figure 1: Individuals who responded that a non-drug pain intervention would be better to treat their pain

Figure 2: Different treatment modalities that individuals reported having received for their pain

Figure 3: Individuals who responded that OMT would decrease their need for pain medications

Subjects reported the following as barriers to receiving care for pain relief: transportation (n=131), cost (n=100), appointment availability (n=29), nothing (n=8), or other (n=16).

CONCLUSION

Over half of this population is willing to use a non-drug pain intervention.

This population does not currently utilize OMT as a treatment modality for pain, but they are open to the idea. Therefore OMT could serve as a novel treatment modality for this population.

Barriers including transportation and cost could be overcome by the offering of OMT at the Homeless Outreach through Medical Education (HOME) Clinic at the True Worth Place Homeless Shelter.

Future research direction:
- Compare the perceptions of non-opioid treatment for pain of the homeless population to the general population
- Treat this population with OMT and see how their pain improves over time

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